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#### BEHEMOTH:

- Loch Ness: First the good news - Nessie is proven to exist. Now the bad one - it's a hoax. Nessletter arrived here some minutes ago, and number 100 (congratulations!) is as excellent as usual. Rip Hepple quotes two interesting stories, but both appear to be hoaxes: 1) The American tabloid Sun, which had carried the news of the discovery of Champ eggs at Lake Champlain some years ago now told its readers that a Dr Alistar McNabb had discovered "a four feet long egg with a tough, rubbery shell". Perhaps the Sun will use the story next when it reports the discovery of Sasquatch eggs in British Columbia. Amerivan tabloids use popular myths, expand them and "redress" them according to popular beliefs. Also in Rip Hepple's Nessletter 40 is a story from the Scots Magazine from June 1990, sent to him by Andreas Trottmann. A L. McP. Fordyce tells of how he saw the Loch Ness monster on land in 1932. His story borrows heavily from the verbal description of the Grant, Cruikshank (also 1932) and Reid land sightings. As Rip points out, his geography of the loch is wrong, and so is his date, as he says Nessie first hit the national British news in autumn 1932. Fordyce's description of Nessie as camel-like sounds unfamiliar, but has been reported before - for example, in the Reid land sighting. Referring to Nessie's egg, J.J. Barloy briefly reports in his "Enquete sur le serpent de mer" (50, August 1990), "un larve du monstre du Loch Ness (?) dans un vivier", according to a A. Miyashite.
- Iceland: Helgi Hallgrímsson, former head of Akureyri Museum, told me in a letter dated Dec 20, 1990, that he was not aware of any sea serpent reports in his country. He said "lake monster" are seen regularly in Iceland, mainly in the Lagarfljót, but ascribes these observations to gas (CH<sub>4</sub>). He has written an article about these sightings about 10 years ago, in Icelandic. I'll try to get it. He also told me that goblins, or better, fairies, are still often seen at specific locations or by very sensitive persons.
- Po River, Italy. The Daily Telegraph, 29 Nov 90 (credit: Janet Bord) had an article on giant fish invading the Po River. The giant fish are catfish, which I have identified as one of the main sources of European lake monster reports already in Fortean Times 46. The catfish are called "freshwater sharks" by the locals: "Rumours abound of children being bitten by the 'monsters', and one fisherman insists that a catfish ate his dog". These are old folk-motifs which are also known from Germany.
- Panama: On Jan 20, 91, the Observer reported that a five-<sup>yard</sup>feet long giant lizard had killed a hunter in the Panamanian jungle. In the Observer of Jan 27, p.50, C. Keeling, from the Educational Services in Practical Zoology, Guildford, points out that this is "utter fabrication" as the largest lizards in South America reaches only 6 ft. He suggests the lizard may have been a crocodile, but most crypto-zoologist will not like such prosaic explanations. But I like the idea of giant lizards hunting for hunters in Panama.
- Fortean Times 56, p.10, has an update on Operation Congo, the attempts to capture a living dinosaur (on film).

#### ISIS:

- Cairo: When the Gulf War was still cold, it was still possible to make fun of Saddam Hussein. See this funny piece in the Saudi Gazette, Dec 12, 1990, p.16: "Iraqis fear mermaid. CAIRO, Tues., (AFP) Egyptian police sent reinforcements today to the Iraqi embassy here after guards said they saw an unidentified human figure swimming across the Nile towards the building. But when police arrived at the island of Zamalek in central Cairo they found a fully clothed woman emerging from the river. The swimmer, identified as 28-old Magda, said she had challenged her husband that she could swim from one bank of the Nile to the other." Meanwhile, Saddam

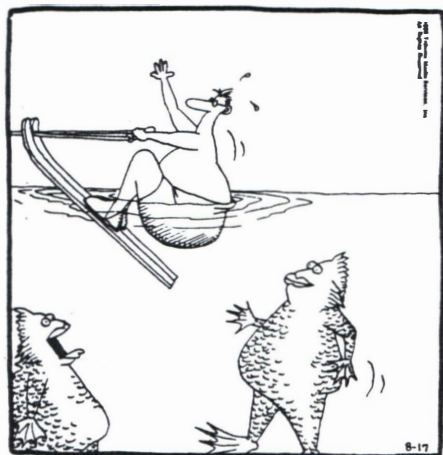
Has definitely over-reacted. As the Saudi Gazette of Feb 2, 91, p. 3, points out, the oil spill he caused in the Persian Gulf is threatening to exterminate the dugongs, the "original mermaids". He is obviously not the person to have fun with. Pity the poor mermaids.

- Initial bipedalism: Francois de Sarre's hypothetical aquatic ancient hominids are mentioned in his journal Bipedia, No. 6, p. 11; and in a French article in "3<sup>e</sup> millinaire" 12: 79 - 91, 1989.

#### LEVIATHAN:

- Small pices: Megamouth shark filmed off Dana Point, California - BBC Wildlife, Jan 91, p.11. Amerindian tales of mermaids and giant serpentine whales: Reports of the Jessup North Pacific Expeditions, Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, part III, W. Bogoras: The Chukchee, pp. 327 - 329. Among other tales, the author refers to giant birds living on the open sea, giant pikes in lakes in Alaska and Siberia, the island beast tradition of the Eskimos and interesting mermaid stories (the author implies that there is a factual basis to them. The Memoirs were published at the beginning of the century, and credit for this note and the BBC Wildlife are due to Gerard van Leusden.

## IN THE BLEACHERS



"Pants him! Pants Him!!"

Aquatic hominids were all the rage early in 1991. This cartoon comes from Moore in the Saudi Gazette, ca. Jan 91

- Japan: Charles Berlitz has published a new book on the Dragon's Triangle near Japan. The German edition is called Das Drachen-Dreieck (Droemer Knaur, Munich 1990). On pp. 105 -112 he lists the following sea serpent reports: Chillagoe, 1902; Shimbun 1901; Java 1906; Nestor (with wrong date 1976!), Georgie (1977 instead of 1877); Zondel 1907; 1970 President Grant (long identified as hump-back whale); 1947 Santa Clara; 1977 New Zealand carcass (which was a shark, not a plesiosaur, as Berlitz insists). and finally, the 1969 sonar hoax off Alaska (Berlitz believes it).

#### KRAKEN:

- Fortean Times 56, p. 14/15, tells the story of the Phillipines giant octopus Dec 19989, an encounter with a giant squid off Dorset in Jan 90, and a photograph of a new globster at Bermuda, similar to the Tasmania beach monster of 1962. The most likely explanation is that these blobs of flesh are decomposing whale blubber.

#### WHALES:

- 55 pilot whales stranded at Squaw Id, Mass (Rheinpfalz 13 Dec 90)
- dolphin stranded at Den Halder, Netherlands (Algemeen Dagblad, 15 Dec, credit: G. van Leusden)
- Early in Jan, several dozens of dead dolphins were washed ashore at the Bay of Biscay. At the Atlantic coast of South France, at Mont de Marsan, 30 dead ones were washed ashore early in Feb (Sonntag Aktuell 10 Feb 91, p. 36).
- SHARK: A 10 m /33ft shark was caught by a French fisherman in his net near Marseille. The animal weighed over 2 tonnes, the tail fin spanned 4 m / 13 ft! (AFP in Rheinpfalz Jan 30). This must have been a basking shark.

This was Bilk 40, I hope you liked it. Bilk 41 will appear in May, I promise some interesting bit'sand notes.